No. 341

The Christian News-Letter

Edited by KATHLEEN BLISS

6th July, 1949

HOLBROOK LIBRARY PACIFIC SCHOOL OF RELIGION

THIS LAST NUMBER of the Christian News-Letter can only be an expression of profound gratitude for the very many letters which have been received during the past six weeks. If it were humanly possible for the editor to write personally to all who have written to her, this would certainly be done. Every letter has been carefully read and deeply appreciated.

NEWS-LETTER

FINAL ISSUE

SUPPLEMENTS

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BY

H. BUTTERFIELD

For the first few years of its life every number of the News-Letter opened with the words "Dear Member". When the format was revised a few years ago it was decided for several reasons to drop this form of address. The letters which have arrived from readers during the past few weeks show that many of the writers had a sense of belonging to something, and feel an acute sense of loss at its disappearance. It would be good to be able to quote some of these letters in full, but a selection will suffice to show the kind of community of thought and prayer which many News-Letter readers experienced.

One reader says, "I send the C.N-L. to friends who are lone Christians trying to keep their end up in out of the way places and in difficult conditions. I know myself that in the war when I was very isolated the C.N-L. was the only publication which made me feel *in* things and part of the Body. I don't believe those at the centre always realize how cut

off we often are in the field." "What saddens me," writes another, "is that this necessity seems to be symptomatic of the times. There are so many things that need to be urgently done and thought and said, and only a few people to do the work." "It seems to be a tragic revelation of the bankruptcy of our strategy," writes a bishop, "that we should be unable to maintain an experiment which by and large must surely have been about as effective and fruitful as anything that has been done in our lifetime. What the loss will mean to many of us journeyman Christians who relied on this to keep our minds focussed on really significant issues, I cannot think." A letter from a Vice-Chancellor says, "One 's table is flooded with publications, many of them a mere nuisance, but the Christian News-Letter is one of the great exceptions. I think I have read every number."

Several readers describe how they came in touch with the News-Letter: "I began taking it," writes one of them, "when I was still in the army, as the result of a course on Christian leadership in Italy. Through the C.N-L. I was introduced to the Student Christian Movement, to Swanwick, the Westminster Conference and the ecumenical movement as a whole. As a service ordinand, a university student, then as a student in a theological college, I have been helped enormously." Another reader who made good use of the News-Letter while in the forces (and many hundreds of copies used to go fortnight by fortnight to men and women in all the services) writes of the C.N-L., "It began to arrive on board the destroyer in which I served during the Battle of the Atlantic. In all that medley of sweat and toil it was hard to think sanely, but the News-Letters arrived regularly with some message which enabled one to look beyond the actual present struggle. Then they followed me up to the Arctic Circle where I served for two years in a battleship, and there weekly with a group of officers and sailors we found much for discussion in the Letters. Much too highbrow some of them were, no doubt, for us. Then they followed me out to Australia in a troopship, and back again to England. My old Mother who lay ill for a year with a very painful illness, also found the

etters a great help, and for both of us they were a link in ur letter writing and in our life of the spirit."

Many letters have come from parish priests and ministers. Alas, what will happen to my sermons ? " asks one, and om a remote address in Scotland comes this letter, typical f many : " Into the usual post-Sunday flatness of a manse n a Monday morning your current News-Letter arrived nd plunged me into a pit of gloom, and I am writing now rthwith to plead that the decision, arrived at I know not ithout due deliberation and pain, be nevertheless recon-dered, and heaven and earth moved for the Letter's con-nuance. It has been for me, a parish minister entangled n the toils of congregational life, a window into the world f outside events and current thought. If that window is losed I have no other." A school chaplain writes, " Here t Shrewsbury School we have built up a group of sixth-rm boys who study the News-Letter fortnight by fortnight. Ve have had some admirable discussions. The News-Letter as always seemed to be wrestling with reality, and I owe nany friends to it."

The letters from laymen in many different walks of life re far too numerous to quote. They have come from those vho live busy lives in industry, commerce, politics, the civil ervice, the armed forces, on the stage, in journalism, educa-ion, and in art and letters. " As a very busy industrial cientist, I have not the time I would like for solid reading bout the things which have been the concern of the C.N-L. There are authoritative and trustworthy scientific and echnical journals, which are not always right but in general an be trusted. There is need, I am sure, for an authoritative Christian journal, which, if not always right, aims at the standard set by the C.N-L." Another reader, who is a nursery gardener, says, " Amongst my activities, hoeing, watering, cooking the Sunday dinner, I have always felt he News-Letter kept open a window which otherwise might nave closed completely." " I have just been working my way round the world (singing) and the arrival of the C.N-L. has been a red-letter day in every country I have visited, and I have shared, and discussed it with many people."

Some of the most appreciative letters come from those who would describe themselves as on the fringe of the Christian Church: "My approach to religion is unorthodox," says one of them, "but I have felt how great was the gain to all men of goodwill to have an organ in which Church people of differing outlook could find common ground, even with those who are not active members of Churches, in the search for a path through the difficulties by which humanity is beset." "Readers like myself, unconnected with any special group which may have other means of circulating news, will perhaps miss it most of all."

As we go to press the letters begin to come in from overseas: "I feel obliged to say to you how much we in Holland regret the tidings that the C.N-L. will cease to appear. It has become a great friend to us, and has made a great contribution to forming the minds of our Christian laymen and pastors. Parts of the C.N-L. were translated and circulated in our Church newspapers. We earnestly hope and pray that the C.N-L. will reappear soon in some form, for we cannot do without it."

Many readers ask whether it would be possible to continue the News-Letter as a quarterly, a monthly, an occasional paper, or as a circular letter. All these and many other possibilities were carefully considered before the decision to close down was taken, and we reached the conclusion that such developments were either editorially or financially impossible at present. Other readers have expressed, some of them strongly, the conviction that since the News-Letter has been valuable and has met for many people a real need, sooner or later something else will arise to take its place. A member of Parliament, for example, who subscribes for twenty-five copies, writes, "I shall not ask for the balance of my subscriptions, because I confidently believe in the miracle that someone will come forward and help you."

Many readers have asked that if at some future date it is possible to make a new beginning in a different form they may be informed. The Frontier Council wishes News-Letter readers to know that all the News-Letter records are being preserved intact. If the miracle occurs and a new

eginning can be made the present readers of the News-etter will be the first to be told of it. The Frontier Council ould also like to assure readers that if as time goes on natters of interest arise which they would like to bring to the otice of past readers of the News-Letter, they will com-nunicate with them.

As we have often said, the two main interests of the News-Letter have been the growth and development of the cumenical movement, with which both the editors have been in the closest personal touch, and the relationship of Christian faith and the various aspects of the secular world. The News-Letter has done its best, in its space, to inform eaders of developments in the ecumenical movement and o discuss the religious situation in other countries.[1]

The other task which the News-Letter has tried to per-orm, described by many of our readers in their recent etters as that of " opening a window on the world ", has never been an easy one, either in war or in peace. No Christian and no lover of men can read the newspapers or listen to the radio in these days without a deepening sense of the tragedy of our human lot, and in particular of the tragic contrast between the immense potentialities of the human mind and spirit and the forces of power and self-assertion which threaten to drag humanity to self-destruction.

It is easy for the Christian looking out on such a world to feel that he belongs to a small minority fighting for something of immense value, attacked and oppressed by evil powers, most especially by communism, and destined to suffer much and to have to take to some sort of underground

[1] In addition to the *Ecumenical Review* published quarterly, to which attention was drawn in C.N-L. No. 334, the following two publications may be of interest to some C.N-L. readers. (1) Associate members of the British Council of Churches (minimum subscription 10s. per annum ; address : 56 Bloomsbury Street, W.C. 1), receive six times a year the Council's Bulletin, *The Church in the World*, which gives news of the work of the British Council of Churches and of the World Council of Churches. (2) The World Council of Churches publishes from Geneva a monthly bulletin called *Ecumenical Press Service*. Short paragraphs are quoted from the secular and religious press of many countries on matters affecting the Churches without comment. Particulars from W.C.C. London Office, 5 St. Martin's Place, Trafalgar Square, W.C. 2.

existence in order to preserve its life. The turning out of papers, the accumulation of ten years, which has gone on during the past few weeks has brought to light a dozen pages of foolscap written in the careful hand of William Temple, the first draft of what was certainly the most influential of all the Supplements the News-Letter ever published, No. 198, entitled, " What Christians stand for in the secular world ". With characteristic brevity and incision he remarked in this paper that the Church might be driven to the catacombs but to seek them or to harbour the thought of taking flight to them was a dereliction of Christian duty. Those words were written some time before the challenge of communism to the Christian Churches in Europe and in China became as overt as it is to-day, but in our view they are none the less true. The God who raised up the Assyrians to admonish His chosen people is still to-day Sovereign Lord of the world He made and of the course of human history. For the Christian the way through the perplexities and terrors of our time is not in flight, but in going out strengthened by the inward peace of God to meet the experiences which life brings, as coming from God.

Because the News-Letter has always made this puzzling and difficult relationship between the inner life of the spirit and the outward world of secular history a main stream of its interest, we are profoundly grateful to Professor Butterfield[1] for writing the last two of his Supplements before they were due, in order that we may be able to publish them in this final number of the Christian News-Letter.

Kathleen Bliss

[1] Professor Butterfield's Third Programme lectures with some additional material are to be published by G. Bell & Sons in the autumn, probably at 7s. 6d.

P.S.—The members of the Christian Frontier Council have been much encouraged by and are deeply grateful for the unexpired portions of their subscriptions which many readers have given to the Council's funds. After 1st September the Council's address will be c/o Canon A. R. Vidler, 8 The Cloisters, Windsor Castle, Berks.

THE CHRISTIAN AND HISTORY

II—The Christian and the Marxian Interpretation of History

By H. BUTTERFIELD

It is necessary to start from the fact that (so far as the technical historian's universe is concerned) it is human beings who make history, for their vitality keeps all the wheels in motion, and ideas exist because human beings have brains. At the second stage of the argument, however, we realize that the initial appearance of "sovereignty" in self-acting human beings is to some degree an optical illusion. Men make history, it is true—they do not merely sit and suffer it—but they are partly made by history in the first place, gravely affected by the fact that they are born into a certain social class, or brought up in a Protestant household or taught to do their thinking in the English language. The problems they have to face, the very predicaments in which they find themselves, are also the products of history—things which the historian would try to explain by examining their antecedents. So all men are entangled in what might almost be called a system of necessity, they are caught in a complicated piece of network which conditions their actions at multitudinous points and with varying degrees of constraint; though it must be remembered that they are real live creatures entangled in the network—not helpless prisoners, fastened or inert within it.

There is a particular sense in which it may be said that the academic historian is interested in the action of men precisely in this latter aspect—that is to say, in its aspect as conditioned action. We may regard Charles I as a free man, who might have acted differently, but the historian can hardly reach deep enough to measure the man's responsibility or to do more than charge him with his share in our universal sin. The historian deals rather with what we might call the underside of the tapestry, the discoverable roots of human conduct. He takes Charles I's action as it was in fact committed, and assembles around it everything that he can gather concerning that monarch's position, his physical structure, his education, his motives, his temptations,

and the like ; in other words, he seeks what we call the "historical explanation"—which must never be regarded as the total explanation—of the episode in question. For this reason the historian (when he is analysing, and not merely narrating) is a student of that necessity which conditions, though it must never be regarded as determining, human action. And an interpretation of history (in the sense that Marxism is an interpretation) is a commentary on that system of necessity—a commentary on the providential order.

In this sense we need not be dismayed by a "materialist" interpretation of history ; indeed we might say that technical history as it is usually understood is just the materialist interpretation of the course of ages. If we remember our original thesis, that it is human beings who make history, and keep in mind a second thesis—namely that nothing less than the whole of the past is necessary to provide the "historical explanation" of the present—these two things set definite limits to the scope and import of any interpretation of history whatsoever. I must say, then, that if a few blows on the head with a hammer may be sufficient to put me out of the historian's universe altogether, I ought not to be surprised if an interpretation of history, of the system of necessity (in other words of this aspect of the providential order) should have a hard and materialist quality. I need not feel that an economic interpretation of history is an absurdity, for it may register the fact that certain economic conditioning circumstances may set insurmountable checks on human action or barriers to human achievement. Such a view would go further than would be legitimate in any interpretation of history (in the academic sense that we are considering the word) if it pretended to assert that man can live by bread alone ; but it bases itself on the thesis that in the technical historian's universe man, however spiritual he may be, cannot live without bread. It may be true that no great advance in literary culture could take place even so long as men were living in the constant unmitigated fear of starvation. We ought to be prepared to consider that perhaps there could be no advanced science, no abstruse philosophy, no modern rationalism until the development of means of production had brought about a certain progress in society, complicating the social structure and producing a division of labour. It is in

lation to this particular line of thought that we have to consider e merits and the defects of Marxist history.

Lord Acton thought it the duty of the historian to understand ıe enemy better than the enemy understood himself; and it ɔuld hardly be denied that this is more particularly the duty f the Christian—most of all perhaps in dealing with Marxism, ɣhere we shall never diagnose the evil until we have discovered ıe good. Nothing should be further from our minds than the asy game of making debating points out of incidental issues, ɣhile evading the labour of disengaging that element of truth ɣhich all systems must possess before they can gain the slightest ɡrip on any great sections of opinion. If politics had never come nto the question it would long ago have been recognized more ɾankly that Marx and Engels, in spite of the weaknesses which ɜeem so obvious, made an important contribution to the study of ıistory. We make a mistake sometimes when we compare our ıistory as it exists in the ideal with Marxist history as it exists in ɑctuality—we have in mind a rarefied form of academic history which in reality has only a limited range of effectiveness in our world, and we overlook the fact that Marxist history may still have its points against the kind of history which the average Englishman holds in his head. Also it is difficult for people to change the accustomed framework of their history, and it entails a greater uprooting in the mind than most men are capable of; so that the Marxian presentation of the story revolts many people as a mis-shapen structure, because it confronts them with something so different from the scheme of history with which they are familiar. So we are able to bring ourselves to the fact that contemporary Communism, precisely by reason of its interpretation of history, is one of the most formidable competitors that Christianity ever had to face.

The Marxists did not invent but have given currency to that dialectical method which tends to see a conflict in society—thesis fighting antithesis—until the emergence of the new thing, the synthesis, puts an end to the old conflict under a system that both embraces and supersedes the earlier parties. This formula, whatever its weaknesses, is capable of supreme elasticity, while at any rate it saves people from a more unfortunate error that is still common amongst us—the habit of seeing in history a more

simple progress, an ascent in a straight line of logical development. Those who say that Protestantism led to toleration and then so easily assume that there was something in the original form of Protestantism which logically led to modern liberty, have a less satisfactory pattern in their minds than those who see the conflict of Catholic and Protestant leading to a toleration which was initially not deducible from either of the two. The Marxist is more formidable in one respect as a result of this: he is the more likely to have his mind prepared for the emergence of surprises at the next turn in history.

It might be asked why we should ever need an interpretation of history (in the sense that we are now considering such a thing) —why we should not merely historically enquire. It appears, however, that people may survey the evidence and get the facts of a matter correct, while telling the story, so to speak in the wrong universe; and Marx did some good by inverting the policy of his "idealist" predecessors, and by reminding us that human history is curiously fastened to the earth. When Napoleon said that the nature of weapons decides everything else in the art and organization of war; when Parry once showed how the nature of instruments conditioned a development in music at an important point; when Holland Rose described how men opened their minds quickly enough for the great voyages of discovery once the requisite nautical apparatus was at their service; when Virginia Woolf gave £500 a year and a room of one's own as a necessary condition for the production of literature, they may all of them have been wrong, or they may have been exaggerating, but they possessed the right kind of feeling as historians. There may be no known limits to the potentialities of the human mind, but so long as no instrument exists except a tin whistle certain limits are set to the kind of music which in fact will be composed in the world. And when, at the opposite extreme, historians attribute the break-up of feudalism to the decline of the feudal idea, or account for the end of the tribal system by talking of the decline of the tribal idea—when they speak as though the human mind just decided to arise and expand at the Renaissance—they are reading their history in the wrong universe and failing to hold the story down to earth.

It is perhaps the Marxists more than anybody else who have taught us to see our history structurally—not to be content with the mere surface-drama of events but, when we are studying an episode, to make a kind of geological examination of the ground underneath. Even if we are interested primarily in the history of ideas, we should not to-day study the pure development of ideas in the air, but should hunt out their relationships with the social environment and with the social changes that had been taking place. The Marxists are not original when they assert the fundamental character of the class-conflict in history, but again they are responsible for much of the currency which this thesis has attained; and I think that the modern historian would hardly study, say, the spread of the Reformation without examining the structure of society and the tensions between classes in the region concerned. When the Marxists say that the ultimate source of significant change is to be found in an alteration in the means of production, they make an assertion which is difficult to prove or to disprove, especially as their system is capable of extraordinary elasticity. They may have in mind chiefly long periods of history; for example the differences between feudal society and the modern bourgeois world—differences which they see running through the whole fabric of the resulting civilization. They would seem to make a mistake, however, when studying history (where everything so quickly becomes entangled with everything else) to imagine that things can be easily unravelled, and that one can lay hold of a single factor that is the ultimate factor, a cause that lies behind all other causes, an irreducible " starting-point of historical change ".

Partly owing to crudities and perversions; partly owing to an entanglement in ideas or prejudices which happened to be current when the system was being developed over a century ago; partly owing to the humble character of many of the people who have followed and extended the system, and who fell into some of the pitfalls of self-taught history; partly again owing to partisanship and polemical intention—in other words, to the fact that the system has been identified with a political cause; and finally, because its devotees have so often shown rigidity in respect of principles of their own which required supreme elasticity of mind—for all these reasons the men who have actually written

Marxist history have tended to produce a kind of history and a type of historical universe with which we must quarrel very radically indeed. If they have been right in calling attention to features of the historical process which had been ignored or insufficiently appreciated, they have fallen into errors parallel to the ones committed by their predecessors. They have seized upon one aspect of the truth and assumed it to be the whole.

In a fundamental sense—in a sense which reaches out far beyond the mere question of an historical method—the Marxian outlook takes materialism for granted, and takes it as the whole of the story, assuming that the concrete material things are sufficient to account for everything, and that historical explanation is a total and self-sufficient explanation of the universe. The Marxian theses concerning the processes of history could be held in a certain manner by those who rejected this philosophy as a whole—just as one might believe in the class-less society without necessarily being an atheist. The idea that we should be able to explain a thing if we could tell its history, the mundane self-sufficiency of the universe, and the denial of God are things not peculiar to Marxism, in any case ; but were rather taken over by it from the secular liberals.

The Marxist historical method becomes a grave danger, however, to those who hold this general materialist outlook ; and the danger is increased by the fact that in the Marxists there is " materialism " in a more popular sense of the word—an approach to history which is too greatly preoccupied with the question of the distribution of worldly goods. Even if the cause of this is a certain altruism and a charitable intent, the kind of history which results is liable to be possessed with a kind of " materialism " that is actually corrupting to the mind. In so far as they contain important elements of truth the Marxian principles would be useful to anybody rather than a Marxist—most useful of all perhaps for a secure Christian, proof against the charm of materialism as such, yet anxious to keep in touch with the hard earth. It generally happens that the Marxists are too materialistic in their view of the nature of human beings, and, if in a certain sense they have done service by tearing this mask from human nature, they have done great harm by their lack of interest in human beings as such, their lack of awareness of that universe

ich lies inside a personality. In reality amongst the Marxist torians this general attitude (though it is not by any means a cessary consequence of the Marxian theses concerning the his- rical process) has a great effect upon the texture of the narrative at is produced and the nature of the universe that is being scribed. Economic self-interest too often becomes not merely a as inside human beings and a fundamental factor in history, but e very motor of men's activity and the standing subject of their ental calculations.

The actual processes of history are distorted through this ror to a less degree than some people might assume. If a man not interested in promoting his business, or even if he with- aws from business in order to pursue one of the arts, his place the story will be taken by other people who do have the push— o that the course of economic history will run on much the same. lso it is not always realized how greatly a man born in a certain ocial class, even if he is charitable and well-intentioned, will be onstricted in his vision because he has been accustomed to iewing events from the platform of that class. The statistics of vote taken in this country at the present day on the place to be iven to the classics in our educational system might very well fford an example of this.

We have seen that human action is not really "sovereign" ction and we have noted how intent the historian must be for hose discoverable factors which condition the conduct and even he thoughts of men. All the most dangerous assumptions in he world have been smuggled into the argument, however, if we think that these factors do more than "condition" human conduct in varying degrees and if we accept them as real "causes", real makers of history. It may be true on the one hand that, so long as there exists no better instrument in the world than a wooden pipe, a serious limitation is bound to restrict the kind of music which it is possible to produce. In such a case, however, the frontiers that are set to any enterprise of the mind, like the fencing round a house, may block a lateral expansion on any side, while still leaving room to soar, still leaving everything up to heaven wide open for the creative activity of human beings. Those who see in history a sort of continuous in-breeding, on the ground that the men who decide

the course of things at any given time are themselves only the product of their age, make a grave mistake by the introduction of this word " only ". They forget how all the influences and ingredients which the age and environment may provide are liable to be churned over afresh inside any human personality, so that each man is a separate fountain of action, unpredictable and for ever producing new things—each man is a possible starting-point for historical change. The higher we go in the order of things, the more this becomes true. In some of our calculations we make too little allowance for the effect of conditioning circumstances especially on other people ; but perhaps it is the neglect of the spiritual character of man which makes human beings also, very often, forget their liberty. It is not clear that anything (unless it might be the very condition of unpropitiousness) was propitious for a religious revival in the eighteenth century except the emergence of John Wesley.

Having asserted the fundamental and structural importance of the economic factor in history, the Marxist historians, when they write their narratives or studies, too often seem to assume that this is the only thing which matters, or that all the other things in human history may thereafter be taken as read. A caricature of this heresy is provided by the youth who imagined that a knowledge of the basic conditions of the Elizabethan era would provide one with a formula or a condensation of the culture of that period which would render the reading of the more incidental manifestations of that culture (Shakespeare himself, for example) superfluous. This again is the effect of materialism in the popular sense of the word and it would not seem to be correct to regard it as an inevitable consequence of the Marxian method as such. If the Marxist may be right when he puts the economic substructure at the bottom, he is not permitted to place it also at the top, or alternatively, to dismiss everything else—art, the constructions of the intellect, the achievements of personality, and the spiritual things—as *mere* superstructure and therefore unimportant. It is one thing to recognize the significance of economic factors in history, or a kind of finality which they may even possess " in the last resort ". It is another thing entirely to see the history of religion or culture or even politics as almost a crude by-product of economic history.

The very faults which are responsible for what might be called e ugliness or repulsiveness of Marxist history, are separable om the essential Marxian theses concerning the historical pro- ss; and a great gulf exists between the extremely subtle theories history which the more high-brow Marxists have put forward d the coarser kind of history which Marxist historians generally em to produce. The faults of the system are often capable of rrection within the system itself, and it is curious to note that e Soviet historian Pokrovsky argued against excessive resort the crude economic interpretation of history, while Stalin a cade later decreed that Pokrovsky had gone too far in this rect economic interpretation himself. It took centuries to fine out of the traditional English or "Whig" interpretation history the crudities (astonishingly parallel to the crudities of Marxism in what is still its youth) which it possessed early in the venteenth century. There is evidence that Marxist history in s higher reaches will be capable of issuing in research of an cademic character not less imposing than the research of some f those people who think that they are writing history without ny presuppositions at all. If people point to actual deceit or rejudice or self-delusion in Soviet historical writing, much of his is not organic to the Marxian method as such, of course; it s the too common characteristic of any history that is written in upport of a government or in praise of a regime, or in flattery f one's country or in the service of the state. Many of the people vho think that they have answered the Marxian view of the istorical process as such seem like so many of those who imagine hat they have answered Christianity when they have only nswered some mistaken vulgarizations or popular errors. The anger lies in the fact that a number of Marxian theses concerning he way in which certain concrete things are connected with one nother in history make it easy to smuggle into the story a naterialism which is sometimes gross; and it may be a subtle natter to expose the conjuring-tricks in detail.

IV—The Christian and the Ecclesiastical Interpretation of History

It would appear to be the case that many people would rest the historical defence of Christianity not so much upon the general religious interpretation of the human drama as a whole, but on the virtues of that period when the religion was universally accepted and the Church presided in a particular way over the destinies of our part of the world. Some people have even imagined that the politico-ecclesiastical synthesis of the middle ages was the norm or the ideal from which the West has departed in a comparatively recent period of aberration. One of the great issues which Christians might do well to consider is the question whether that medieval system is to be regarded as a norm or even as an experiment that is in any sense repeatable; or whether the normal situation to expect in the world is not rather that of the Church in the early centuries, before the Roman imperial government had been won over—namely the situation of Christianity against a pagan background. Those who tend to produce an historical defence of Christianity by reference to the virtues of that system which prevailed in the medieval and early modern times, are committed to a particular kind of defence of the Church in history—a defence of its mundane achievements and its establishment of what purported to be a society based on Christian principles. They impart, therefore, what is really an ecclesiastical flavour to their interpretation of general history as a whole.

The issue would present itself more vividly to us if we were to imagine either communism or Christianity capturing a great section of our globe, and establishing its New Jerusalem. It is easy to see that once the victory had been achieved by some such system constant persecution or coercion might not be necessary to prolong its power from decade to decade, even perhaps from century to century, in the after-period. The orthodoxy that once succeeded in imposing itself might continue its dominion by virtue of habit and intellectual indolence, or through its control of education, or by the very exhilaration of its success. It is when we are contemplating the manner in which such systems originally establish their sway that we meet a paradox which should be a serious matter for contemplation. The communist

stem, in much of its method, its missionary policy, its thirst for thodoxy, its authoritarianism, and its severities (when severities e needed for the consolidation of its power)—above all perhaps the papal insistence that all kindred systems should be in mmunion with Moscow, the new Rome—is almost frightening its mimicry of the Christian Church at certain periods in uropean history.

One of the most moving stories that history has to offer us—he of the clearest cases ever known of the meek inheriting the rth—is the spread of Christianity, from a narrow and uncomising home, over the length and breadth of the Roman mpire. In the very earliest centuries of the Church Christians ould hardly be accused of having made it their object to capture he Roman Government. This was a thing which was added nto them—a gift of Providence to them for the time being—nd an enemy might make a severe criticism of the way their uccessors used the gift, though an historian, aware of the veaknesses of human nature generally, would find it understandble. A general unanimity in the Christian faith—or indeed in nything else—is a solemn and awful thing, not to be counted as rdinarily achievable in adult states of society without the resort o methods that are grim to contemplate. Even if we ask how it vas achieved in barbarian Europe after the fall of Rome, some inpiring examples of missionary work and martyrdom can hardly blind us to the degree to which our religion was often imposed rom above, sometimes after terrible warfare, sometimes as an ccompaniment of cruel military conquest. And we must emember that, when the unanimity breaks—whether we imagine t a Christian or a communist orthodoxy which is losing its hold upon a people that has been attached to it—it is the Christian precedent which justifies us in the view that terrible measures will be resorted to by the threatened system in the endeavour to keep its control.

There is something in the nature of historical science which makes that study adequate to the examination of the changes of things which change, but inadequate for the recording of the permanence of things which stand. History can more easily describe the stages in the expansion of Christianity than measure the influence of that religion as a standing factor in European

history. Apart from this, history easily allows many human things—like men's falling in love—to evaporate out of the story, though they may be of overwhelming importance in actual life. In particular it easily fails to seize hold of the spiritual side of religion, because here is something that tends to elude the historian's peculiar kind of net. Religious history is easily transformed into a form of politico-ecclesiastical history, and it comes to be imagined that the Church is to be justified by the historian in a way that a political body or a utilitarian corporation is to be justified. People forget that the grand fact of European history is the constant preaching of the gospel, the conversion of souls to a more authentic appropriation of religion, and the ministering to their spiritual necessities—a thing which the historian can hardly go on repeating, though it is the same year after year and generation after generation. Here is the impressive story, the point where the work of the Church has eternal validity; here is the task in which it has never failed, the task in which it must not be thought to have failed even when many men are turning their backs upon religion. We often do an injustice both to Churches and to Churchmen because we hold a skeleton of politico-ecclesiastical history in our minds and fail to picture the life of the clergy in its intimacy and its fullness.

In a parallel manner those who seek to measure the importance of Christianity in the history of European civilization must be prepared to deal with something much more subtle and delicate than the kind of politico-ecclesiastical history which they may find depicted in its larger lines in ordinary text-books. The problem is by no means an easy one for we cannot unthink our European history and imagine what it would have been like without Christianity. We may even be deceived if we base our inferences on an inversion of what we see when we observe the changing character of the world as it has become increasingly pagan in our time. The part which Christianity played in the formation of the monarchies and nation-states of Europe would seem to have been performed by other religions in other times and in different parts of the world. If we say that the Church in the middle ages guarded the poor by prohibiting usury, we must remember that in the *Arabian Nights* the usurer is equally hated, and the Jew occupies a position that is curiously parallel with

one which he held in western Europe. The Old Testament, cient Greece, and hints from other parts of the world would nfirm the impression that the condemnation of usury is the tural characteristic of an agrarian society, religion (whether ristian or not) tending to give a legitimate support to the cial ethic that the times required. If Christianity acted as a nductor between the Graeco-Roman civilization and the rbarian world that supervened, it would seem that Moham-edanism served in a similar capacity for the vast dominions of e Arabs. When religion serves as one of the bonds that hold people together it tends to operate in these various ways, parently, even when it is not the Christian religion.

There are dangers, however, when religion is employed as the ment of society or the bond of the tribe. And we who con-emn the pagans of the twentieth century for their contempt of uman personality may forget that Christians themselves have metimes found means of avoiding the implications of heir own teaching. Protestants and Catholics of the sixteenth entury provided precedents for an attitude which regards the nemy as sub-human; for if the enemy was a heretic was he ot an abomination to be destroyed or a devil in human mask? n these circumstances the very word religion possessed certain mplications which would be too illiberal for presentation to the wentieth century.

The truth is that we must consider the domination which the Church so long exercised in Europe as a thing not unrelated to he stage of development that had been reached by society and civilization. Once this has been recognized then we can say hat it was the good fortune of those peoples to be under tutelage and that the greatest good fortune of all was to have as the presiding genius the Christian Church. In other words the particular ordering of things which we associate with the middle ages would be difficult to imagine save in an interim stage in the history of a civilization, and is valid and justifiable by virtue of the situation that existed at the time. It was fortunate, further, that particular circumstances in western Europe gave the Church an unusually independent position in relation to the secular authorities—an advantage it has not always equally enjoyed in modern times. We may even go so far as to hold with Professor

Foakes-Jackson that the power of the Popes in the middle age lay in the dispensation of Providence, and yet that the break down of that power in many parts of Europe in the sixteenth century was equally in the purposes of God. All the same, just as the conversion of the Emperor Constantine had the disadvantage that it was calculated to induce every court-sycophant to make a profession of Christianity, so the idea of a Christian Society was bound to have its seamy underside in the rough-and-tumble of the world.

In any case there seems to be something in the processes of civilization which leads to a greater differentiation of personality, greater autonomy in the individual, a multiplied range of functions for men in society, and a higher claim (a claim that will be asserted by wider classes of people who had been cowed and submissive in various respects) to make one's own choice of a philosophy or a faith or a view of life. At this stage in the story habit and intellectual indolence and the group-spirit are less able to guarantee the unquestioning acceptance of an inherited creed. The unanimity in favour of a traditional system is broken, and in the new condition of things the very word religion loses a certain fringe of meaning which had come to be attached to it. In particular religion tends to lose part of that quality or that influence which had made it so serviceable when it had had the additional function of being the bond of the tribe.

It is not for Christians, however, to regret this transition in itself, especially as it is one which in a sense brings society and civilization to a finer blossoming. Their faith is one which presumes this lofty view of human personality. Indeed, for Christianity this whole transition is rather a return to the original purity of its first state—it is a reduction of religion to its essential meaning where it is not regarded as useful by reason of the support which it gives to something else. Christianity may be two thousand years old but it did not arise in a primitive world or in the form of anything like a tribal religion. It emerged when civilization was in a stage of high development, emerged as a victory over all forms of tribalism, and addressed the adult judgement of men not regarded as under the tutelage of custom or of group-opinion. It did not ignore the question of human solidarity, but solved it for a world of freer personalities at a

el higher than the herd-level—seeking to achieve the fusion a voluntary love which far from submerging the individual ried personality to a higher power. We may say on the one nd that there is nothing to prevent an individual from achieving greatest spiritual heights and giving the finest Christian tness in any century of the Church's history—nothing to event any individual Christian from showing the highest pect for the personality of others. On the other hand, if we thinking of the ideas which pervade a whole society and form rt of the environment of men at large, we may say that it quires a high degree of advancement in a civilization to achieve ything like a general social recognition of the value which nristianity places upon personality.

Since human beings are so wilful it may be true that the odern western world, by giving so much rein to individuals, is civilization perpetually in jeopardy through an excess of liberty. is a question whether this emphasis on human personality is a asible thing in fact unless it is accompanied by a powerful ffirmation of the spiritual side of life. There is grave danger or our world if, in the new situation, individuals do not by an utonomous act of judgement go over to that Christian religion vhich their forefathers so long accepted perhaps by habit, conagion and submissiveness. Christianity itself indeed offers a ligher challenge to every individual and makes a higher test in he new situation of the world; though the response when it omes has sometimes an added authenticity, such as would ome in the ancient days when a merely habitual Christian saw he light with peculiar vividness, and was converted.

If we ask what part Christianity has played in the general development of our civilization, there is a moment of transition which gives us a glimpse of the processes at work, and confirms us in the view that we must look beyond the direct policies and achievements of ecclesiastical systems, and think rather of the leavening influence of subtly pervasive ideas. A great progress in what we might call the amenities and urbanities of our civilization seems to have taken place in the eighteenth century; and roughly speaking in that period we see the effective emergence of many of the characteristic features of that "western way of life" which we so often contrast with the system of Soviet

Russia. Especially we see a growing consciousness that all men—even classes long oppressed—should be conceded a larger realm for the exercise of moral decision and personal choice. These ideas emerged very often in opposition to ecclesiastical prejudice or ecclesiastical authority; and yet constantly, in the very arguments that are used, we see in them a kind of thinking that had been seriously affected by Christianity. Men who might be indignant against the Church and even deserters from the faith repeatedly betrayed the fact that Christianity still governed their unconscious assumptions and still lingered on as a sort of after-music in their minds.

In the light of more sinister and radical intellectual movements that have supervened we can more readily recognize to-day how much of the thought of the eighteenth century showed signs of being an unconscious attempt to translate parts of the Christian tradition into secularized terms. Modern movements of liberalism, humanitarianism, internationalism—modern cries for freedom of conscience and for the uplifting of depressed classes—have borne marks of the leavening influence of Christian thought and it was their tragedy that, like modern humanism, they thought that they could live of themselves, and broke with the religion that had been their mother. Even in the realm of what we might call purely worldly-wisdom they cut themselves off from other parts of the Christian tradition which—as we to-day can more easily recognize—it would have been at least prudent for them to remember. It was unfortunate for the world—unfortunate particularly for France—that though there was a need for a brake on the eighteenth-century reformers, ecclesiastical opposition in particular also had its wilful aspects, and ecclesiastical authority had hardened its heart. The result was that the European tradition henceforward became too sharply divided, though not so sharply in England, where, for example, nonconformity afforded something of a bridge between the sundered parts.

It is one of the paradoxes of modern history that the primary demand which Christianity must make of any social order, the demand for freedom of conscience was a demand which came in the western world with every sign of the leavening of Christian influence; yet the demand was not only resisted by ecclesiastical

ority ; it had to be asserted by rebellion against the older esiastical organization of society. Indeed it could only be eved by the actual overthrow of such an order. No better nple could be given of the way in which Christianity may be spiring with the development of civilization to achieve a d, even though Christians themselves, or ecclesiastical authori- are making wrong decisions on that very matter. This ns, furthermore, that those who merely preached the Gospel nout *arrière-pensée*—preached purely for the salvation of ls—always worked better in the cause of civilization than they r knew or intended ; just as those who spread piety, humility, charity are acting like a leaven, and helping to produce a erent conception of personality from that hard and arrogant which seems to be emerging in Soviet Russia. Perhaps only y can prevent the western regime of modern individualism m rushing wilfully to its doom.

t may prove to be the case that judgement has fallen on that ime of liberty and democracy which the west so stoutly de- ds against the modern barbarism of the east. In that case the ck is put back and the expansion of the area of this modern barism may bring upon us a further instalment of the Dark es. In such a retreat of civilization it is not possible to see w, humanly speaking, the Church, as one of the institutions in world, may be expected to play this time the remarkable part ich it was performing a thousand years ago, when the down- of the Roman Empire in the west left ecclesiastical authority a particularly strong position. The barbarian invasions of ose early centuries not only magnified the secular leadership it was open to the Church, but provided populations more ienable to religious guidance than the barbarians of the modern orld are likely to be. We shall not expect that once again for e fight against illiteracy, the provision of competent administra- on, the development of schools and universities, the cultivation the arts, the promotion of legal studies and political theory, e world will be dependent on the services of the clergy. And the urban developments in society seem to have carried with em in European history a tendency to secularization—seem ways to have encouraged the rise of a lay spirit—the men of the w Dark Ages will be a still more difficult problem ; for it would

have to be an almost unimaginable catastrophe that could no prevent our civilization from being an affair of towns and cities

If the new Dark Ages come Christianity still carries forward as it did before—the legacy of the higher civilization. It do so not by confronting communism with an authoritarian counte system, but because it cannot help asserting the uniqueness an the value of personality. Precisely by pursuing its task in th salvation of souls, confident that in this case once again Prov dence has unexpected things in store—precisely by seeking th kingdom of God and waiting for the rest to be added unto it the Church can repeat the glory, though it can never expect h sheer contriving to duplicate the actual achievement of thousand years ago.

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Published by the Christian Frontier Trust Ltd., and printed in Great Britain by the Church Army Press, Cowley, Oxford.